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Middle East Situation Report #15
(as of 1100 EST, 16 January 1984)

LEBANON/SYRIA

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In his meeting with Ambassador Rumsfeld last Friday, President Assad stuck to the hardline Syrian position that the May 17 Agreement must be cancelled before a government of national unity is formed. Assad nodded his concurrence with Rumsfeld's strong argument for strengthening the cease-fire and implementing the security plan, but did not return to the subject.

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Despite the meeting's cordial tone, Assad charged that the US had prevented Gemayel from renouncing the Agreement. He complained that the chronic problem with US policy was "unlimited" Israeli influence in the US and dwelled at length on his belief that Syria had been deceived by Ambassador Habib during the June 1982 negotiations.

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Ambassador Rumsfeld notes there was an adamant and ominous tone in some of Assad's comments. Assad said that collaborators usually paid with their lives for resisting the liberation battle, adding that Lebanese have been killed for cooperating with the Israelis and that more people would die.

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The probable Druze attack against Marine positions at the Beirut airport yesterday suggests that Druze opposition to the security plan may be hardening.

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-- [redacted] Gemayel, in a compromise gesture last week, offered to pay Druze armed forces deserters one month's back salary. Druze representatives reportedly rejected the offer and increased their demands for Druze remuneration.

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-- The Druze also remain concerned that the Lebanese Army will take control of key positions in the mountains of the lower Shuf before a political solution is reached.

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The death of Major Saad Haddad on Saturday probably will have little impact on Israel's control of his Free Lebanese Army militia or Israeli efforts to expand its size.

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- Haddad has always been a figurehead leader with Israeli military advisers controlling his activities.
- Haddad has been ill for years and the Israelis have been cultivating Lt. Khalil as his successor for at least the past year.
- We believe Israel will continue to actively recruit for and support Khalil's leadership of the Free Lebanese Army militia as an alternative to the Lebanese Army.

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[redacted] the Syrians plan to conduct the first live fire test of an SS-21 surface-to-surface missile tomorrow. Syrian military personnel may not be adequately trained to use them for at least six months. The missile's 120-km range and increased accuracy, compared to the FROG-7 and SCUD B also in Syria's inventory, will improve Syria's ability to attack external targets, including Beirut, from within its territory.

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PERSIAN GULF

The Kuwaiti Ministry of Justice may not prosecute 19 of the 21 defendants in the December bombing of the US Embassy and other targets in Kuwait for lack of evidence

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-- [redacted] the Government of Kuwait decided to play down the bombing incident to avoid offending Iran.

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-- Tehran earlier has threatened members of the Royal Family if any of the defendants were convicted.

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US Embassy Manama reports that Bahrain will help provide security for the arrival of the Marine Stinger surface-to-air missile detachment which is to provide protection to US Navy ships in the Persian Gulf. Crown Prince Hamad expressed doubts that the Iranian threat of air or sea attacks on naval ships is very serious. He believes that attacks on land installations were more likely.

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THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR

Iran continues to denounce the UK for allegedly supplying chemical weapons to Iraq.

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Middle East Situation Report #20
(as of 1100 EST, 23 January 1984)

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LEBANON/SYRIA

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[redacted] the security situation in Beirut was relatively calm. [redacted]

TARPS missions continue to be flown--one over the weekend and another is scheduled for today--but they remain in a stand-off mode and have not drawn hostile fire. [redacted]

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Fighting at the usual confrontation points continued over the weekend. The Lebanese Army fought Shia militiamen in the southern suburbs of Beirut for the first time in nearly a month. Druze fighters engaged the Lebanese Army in the mountains around Beirut. [redacted]

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-- Druze forces shelled the presidential palace at Baabda, apparently in retaliation for Lebanese Army shelling of Druze leader Walid Junblatt's home in Mukhtarrah. Junblatt's mother is in residence there, and he told Ambassador Paganelli in Damascus that if any harm came to her, the entire Gemayel family would suffer the consequences. [redacted]

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A Junblatt confidant gave the US Embassy in Damascus a communique outlining the National Salvation Front (NSF) version of recent efforts to achieve a security agreement, and accused Gemayel of bringing Lebanon to a new impasse. The communique reaffirms NSF determination to reestablish Lebanese unity, but warned that unless the atmosphere improved, the security agreement would be finished. He noted that mutual shelling, once restricted to front line areas, has become widespread.

-- He also noted that the Druze were aware of Gemayel's preparation of two Army brigades to move into the mountains. [redacted]

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In a meeting with the US Embassy in Damascus, a Druze representative reaffirmed that they stood by the security agreement if their two conditions--back wages and promotions for Druze officers--were met. Despite this reassurance, Junblatt over the weekend escalated his vituperative comments against Gemayel, calling on Gemayel and his government to resign. In a

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press interview Junblatt also denounced the MNF as hostile to a broad section of the Lebanese people, and rejected its replacement by UN forces. [redacted]

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-- According to the US Embassy in Beirut, this is the first time Junblatt has rejected the idea of a UN presence in Beirut. [redacted]

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PERSIAN GULF

The Kuwait Embassy believes Kuwait and possibly other member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council would respond favorably to a US offer of anti-terrorist training and coordination in the wake of recent bombings in Kuwait by Iranian-backed Dawa Party. The Embassy suggests that an offer to the GCC might make the offer easier for Kuwait to accept. [redacted]

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THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR

Iraqi aircraft over the weekend struck unidentified targets near the border in northern Iran. Tehran claims to have downed one aircraft. [redacted]

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Japanese Deputy Foreign Minister Nakijima completed his visit to Tehran Sunday. Iranian Foreign Minister Velayati has accepted an invitation to visit Tokyo, a key Japanese objective of the trip. [redacted]

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-- The initial report makes no mention of Japan's mediation efforts to secure a partial ceasefire that would protect Iran's Japanese-built petrochemical plant and Iraq's oil export facilities to the Persian Gulf. [redacted]

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Iraq and Saudi Arabia have informed the US of reports that unidentified European middlemen are selling--with US approval--US-made weapons to Iran. Iraq called in the US Charge Sunday and alleged that Israel was in the process of supplying Iran 60 US-manufactured tanks. The Israelis would seek US approval, which allegedly has support in "some quarters of the State Department and the CIA" as a means of preventing closer Iranian ties to the USSR. The Saudi foreign ministry passed on a report Saturday that Iran had recently received US-made air-to-surface missiles for use on F-14 aircraft. [redacted]

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-- We doubt the accuracy of these reports and suspect Iraqi motives for passing them. The timing and similarity of the two reports suggest that the reports are not coincidental. Iraq may see such reports as means of spurring greater US efforts to curb arms sales to Iran. The Soviets would also value such reports as a way to derail improving US-Iraqi ties. [redacted]

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US inspection at Port Said, Egypt, yesterday (Sunday) of the Cypriot ship bound for Iran appeared to confirm Egyptian claims that the 155-mm howitzer ammunition aboard was of US origin. Cairo is all but certain not to release this cargo for onward travel. [redacted]

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